

*The Christian  
Life Series*

THE  
ALL-SUFFICIENT  
SAVIOUR

CHAS. Mc GREGOR



6.9.23

From the Library of  
Professor Benjamin Breckinridge Warfield  
Bequeathed by him to  
the Library of  
Princeton Theological Seminary

BT 751 .M2

Macgregor, G. H. C. 1864-  
1900.

The all-sufficient Saviour







## The All-Sufficient Saviour

✓  
**THE  
CHRISTIAN LIFE  
SERIES**

**EACH, 16MO, CLOTH, GILT TOP, 50 CENTS**

**BY F. B. MEYER**

**THE SHEPHERD PSALM**

**CHRISTIAN LIVING**

**THE PRESENT TENSES OF THE  
BLESSED LIFE**

**THE FUTURE TENSES OF THE  
BLESSED LIFE**

**BY GEORGE H. C. MACGREGOR**

**THE ALL-SUFFICIENT SAVIOUR**

**BY FRANCES RIDLEY HAVERGAL**

**KEPT FOR THE MASTER'S USE**

**FLEMING H. REVELL COMPANY  
PUBLISHERS**

508  
LIBRARY OF PRINCETON  
JUN 9 1923  
THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

# The All-Sufficient Saviour

BY THE LATE

✓  
REV. G. H. C. MAC GREGOR, M.A.

AUTHOR OF "INTO HIS LIKENESS," "A HOLY LIFE,"  
ETC., ETC.



Fleming H. Revell Company  
Chicago, New York & Toronto  
*Publishers of Evangelical Literature*





## CONTENTS

CHAP.	PAGE
I. JESUS AND OUR SINS . . . . .	9
II. JESUS AND OUR CARES . . . . .	27
III. JESUS AND OUR TEMPTATIONS . . . . .	43
IV. JESUS AND OUR DOUBTS . . . . .	61
V. JESUS AND OUR CROSSES . . . . .	79
VI. JESUS AND OUR BEREAVEMENTS . . . . .	95
VII. JESUS AND OUR PERPLEXITIES . . . . .	111
VIII. JESUS THE ALL-SUFFICIENT SAVIOUR	129



## NOTE

The following addresses were delivered by Mr. Macgregor on consecutive Lord's Day evenings to his own congregation, and, in accordance with a promise to his publishers made shortly before his death, are now issued in the hope that they may be helpful to some. Having, in accordance with Mr. Macgregor's custom, been written only in shorthand, they have been transcribed by a kind friend, and are now issued just as they were written, and have not, of course, had the benefit of revision.





# I

## JESUS AND OUR SINS



# I

## JESUS AND OUR SINS

*"Thou shalt call His name Jesus; for He shall save His people from their sins."*—MATT. i. 21.

Among the sacred songs of the Church of Christ there are few more precious than the *Benedictus*, that hymn of Zacharias, the last of the Old Testament prophets, which, having found its way into the liturgies of the Christian Church, is the vehicle by which the praises of thousands of the redeemed ascend to the ears of God.

In that hymn we have set before us, with wonderful clearness, God's purpose in the Gospel. The inspired saint there prays that God would fulfil to all His people the oath which He swore to Abra-

ham, granting them that, being delivered out of the hand of their enemies, they might serve Him without fear, in holiness and righteousness all the days of their life. This is the purpose of God; and this purpose God fulfils through Jesus Christ, the all-mighty and the all-loving Saviour of men.

Jesus Christ comes forth from the Eternal, to deliver His people out of the hand of their enemies. But of all the enemies of man the strongest, and the most implacable, is sin. All the other enemies, against which man has to fight, are the servants of sin. They are all traceable to sin, and follow in sin's train.

Take the ills that beset the bodies of men, the conflict against which consumes so much of man's time and strength. Hunger, thirst, cold, nakedness, weariness, pain, disease, are all traceable to sin. They are part payment of sin's wages. They are part of that physical death to which man was doomed in the



day when he sinned. Or take the ills which assail the soul of man—ignorance, doubt, fear, care, anxiety, suspicion, distrust, remorse, despair. These also come from sin, and are but foreshadowings of the blackness of darkness, into which sin drags the soul which it has separated from God.

Sin is man's most awful enemy. He who would be man's Saviour, must above all prove Himself able to deal with man's sin.

This is recognized most fully in the Gospel story. The Gospel knows that, until sin has been dealt with, there can be no blessing for man. So it sets before us, as man's Deliverer, one who is called Jesus, because "He shall save His people from their sins." But what is this sin, from which Jesus comes to save?

To be clear on this point is of the utmost importance. The idea of sin is one of the regulative ideas of theology. Our conceptions of God's salvation will

largely turn on our conceptions of that from which God saves us.

Now Scripture sets sin before us in *three* aspects:

1. Sin is an offense against God, rendering the soul guilty, and, because guilty, deserving of, and exposed to, punishment.

2. Sin is a moral defilement, destroying the character, rendering man unclean, and so, unfit for fellowship with God.

3. Sin is a power which enslaves man, and renders him incapable of willing or doing that which is holy and good.

Such is sin, and with each of these aspects of sin Jesus Christ must deal, if He is indeed to be the Saviour of men.

1. Sin is an offense against God. This is the first, and the most serious aspect of sin. It is in this that the essence of sin consists. The idea of sin depends on the idea of God. He who does not believe in God cannot believe in sin; for

the very essence of sin is, that it is transgression of the law of God. It is saying "I will" to the Divine "Thou shalt not;" it is saying "I will not" to the Divine "Thou shalt." Sin is an inconceivably awful thing in its nature. It aims at the Divine Existence. God can not be, unless He be supreme. But he who sins, denies the supremacy of God. He sets his will above the will of God. He who sins would, if he could, pull God from His throne. That is the plain meaning of sin. It is an insult to the Divine Majesty, a denial of the Divine Wisdom, a defiance of the Divine Power. And sin is an inconceivably awful thing in its results. It renders the sinner guilty, and brings him under the condemnation of God. It makes him deserving of punishment, and liable to punishment. As the thief is guilty and by the law of the land condemned, as the murderer is guilty and by the law of the land condemned, so the sinner is guilty and by

the law of God condemned. The fact that the sentence of the law may not be immediately carried out, does not affect the question. He who steals his neighbor's property, he who sheds his neighbor's blood, is, in the moment of his theft and of his murder, guilty and condemned. And if the law be sufficiently vigilant and strong, the question of his punishment is merely a matter of time. He who commits sin is, in the moment of his sinning, guilty and condemned. Every sin deserveth God's wrath and curse, both in this life and that which is to come. And because in God's universe none who is guilty escapes, the sinner's punishment is merely a matter of time.

Man then, because of his sin, is guilty before God, is under God's condemnation, and exposed to God's wrath. And if ever man is to be saved, this condemnation is the very first thing with which the Saviour must deal.

How does Christ deal with it?



He deals with it as our Substitute. He deals with God's condemnation of us, by taking it upon Himself. He bears our sin in His own body on the tree. But to bear sin is, in the language of Scripture, to bear the consequences of sin. To bear theft, is to bear the punishment due to theft; to bear murder, is to suffer the death of shame in which the law expresses its abhorrence and condemnation of that crime; to bear sin, is to bear the punishment due to sin. It is borne down under the awful weight of the wrath of God, until that death is tasted in which God's condemnation of sin is expressed. This the Lord Jesus Christ did, that He might save His people from their sins. He took our place. The cup which we should have drunk, He drank; the blow that should have fallen on us, fell on him; the storm that would have burst on us, burst on Him. "Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us." "He was

wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities, the chastisement of our peace was upon Him, and by His stripes we are healed." As our Substitute Saviour He has dealt with the guilt of our sin, and thus proved Himself a perfect Saviour.

2. But sin is not only an offense against God; it is a moral defilement. Sin renders man not only guilty, but unclean. It renders man not only deserving of hell, but unfit for heaven. This distinction between guilt and moral defilement is fully recognized by us in connection with crime. The criminal is not only condemned by the law, he is cast out by society. His crime attaches a stain to his character, in consequence of which he is shunned by respectable men. From the adulterer, the thief, and the murderer, we instinctively shrink. Their persons inspire our loathing, as their crimes awaken our wrath. But how solemn it is to remember, that what we

feel more or less strongly about such sins as I have mentioned, God feels with an infinite intensity about all sin. To Him sin is unspeakably loathsome.

“Nothing unclean can enter in  
Where God in glory reigns.  
His eyes so pure cannot endure  
The sight of spots or stains.”

Therefore from the stain of sin, from its moral defilement, man must be freed if he is to be saved and brought back to God.

How then does Christ deal with this?

He deals with it as our Righteousness. Christ is not only our Substitute in the sense that He died for us, bearing the punishment that otherwise we should have borne; He is our Substitute in this also, that He lived for us, obeying the law, which we never could obey. And when we believe on Him, we get the benefit not only of His life but of His death, not only of His suffering but of His obedience. This is one of the marvels

of the Gospel, that it offers the sinner not only forgiveness but justification. Because Jesus was perfectly righteous, perfectly holy, He was perfectly fit for fellowship with God, and had complete right of access to God. And the righteousness that He has, He bestows in His love upon His people. Is it not wonderful? Because Christ was treated as we should have been treated, we are treated as He should have been treated. For His sake not only are our sins forgiven, but we are treated as though we had never sinned. His righteousness covers us. The prodigal is not only not turned away, he is treated as though he never had wandered away at all. That is what justification means. We are accepted as righteous in God's sight only for the righteousness of Christ imputed to us, and received by faith alone.

"Jesus, Thy blood and righteousness  
My beauty are, my glorious dress;  
'Midst flaming worlds, in these arrayed,  
With joy shall I lift up my head.



“Bold shall I stand in that great day,  
For who aught to my charge shall lay?  
Fully, by Thee, absolved I am  
From sin and fear, from guilt and shame.”

Thus Jesus saves from the defilement of sin and opens the kingdom of heaven to all believers.

3. But once more, sin is not only moral defilement, sin is a power enslaving man, and rendering him unwilling and unable to do the will of God. This is one of the most awful aspects of sin—an aspect of it that impresses men to-day almost more than any other. The bondage of sin is a fact of which all men are conscious. But what the power of sin is no man knows, until he really sets himself to forsake it. Then he realizes what a giant it is, what a grip it has taken of his nature, and how helpless he is before it. He finds that sin is a malignant disease which he cannot shake off, which grasps the vitals of his being, and which must end in death. He finds that sin is a fire which, once kindled, he

cannot quench, and which burns to the lowest hell. He finds that sin is an evil root which cannot be eradicated by any power of man, but goes on and on, bearing its fruit of agony, and pain, and remorse, and shame. He finds that sin is a mighty current like Niagara, into which man has fallen, and which grasps him and sweeps him on with irresistible force to destruction. Such is sin—a power before which all human power is helpless. And in the grasp of that power some of you still are.

But if man is to be saved, he must not only be saved from sin's guilt, and sin's defilement, but from sin's power. If man is to be fully saved, he must not only, in the infinite mercy of God, be treated as righteous, he must become actually righteous, and holy and good. This is the ultimate purpose of God. He removes man's condemnation, He forgives man's sin, in order that he may become holy. Forgiveness and justification are in order

to holiness. But man cannot be personally holy, until he is set free from the enslaving power of sin. He, therefore, who would be the Saviour of man, must deal with this.

How, then, does Jesus deal with it?

He deals with it as our Lord and King, dwelling and reigning within us by the Holy Ghost. Remember, the Jesus Who shall save His people from their sins is One who lives. He is One who is possessed of all power. He takes them so into union with Himself that they are within the circle of His life. They are in Him as the branch in the vine. So their weakness is turned into might, by the advent of His strength into their lives. The sin which strives to enslave the believer, finds that it has to deal with the believer's Lord. And by that Lord it is defeated; its power is broken, its dominion forever overthrown. The disease which we cannot shake off flies before Him; the fire which we could not

quench is by Him put out; the evil root is eradicated; the mighty current stemmed. The strong man armed meets the stronger than he, and is despoiled. In Him we conquer sin. His power turns the scale of battle in our favor. Sin has not dominion over us. The law of the spirit of life makes us free from the law of sin and death. So we not only will the will of God, but do it. He makes us perfect in every good work to do His will, working in us that which is well-pleasing in His sight through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Thus Jesus deals with sin as our Substitute, saving us from its guilt; as our Righteousness, saving us from its defilement; as our indwelling Lord, saving us from its power. Has He dealt thus with your sins? Is He your Saviour? Have you committed your sin to Him to be dealt with? Have His stripes healed you? Does His righteousness cover you? Does His spirit dwell within you? If not,

in the glorious salvation of which we have been speaking you have neither part nor lot. For none but Jesus can save. All other hope is vain. There is no Name given among men whereby we can be saved but the Name of Christ.





## II

# JESUS AND OUR CARES



## II

### JESUS AND OUR CARES

*"Come unto Me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest."*—MATT. xi. 28.

How full of care the world is! One cannot go abroad, one cannot look into the faces of one's fellow-men, without seeing how deeply furrowed they are, how heavily marked by the burden of care. This, which we all feel, has been put into music of wonderful pathos by the poet Faber. In his poem called "The Sorrowful World" these lines occur:

"Mostly men's many-featured faces wear  
Looks of fixed gloom or else of listless care;  
The very babes that in their cradles lie  
Out of the depths of unknown troubles cry.

"O God! Thou Fountain of perennial glad-  
ness,  
Thy whole creation overflows with sadness;

Sights, sounds, are full of sorrow and alarm;  
Even sweet scents have but a pensive charm."

Care, next to sin, is the greatest foe of man. How full of care the world is! And how full of rest the Word of God is! It breathes peace from beginning to end. Take some of its promises. Isaiah xxvi. 3: "Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on Thee: because he trusteth in Thee." Deuteronomy xxxiii. 27: "The eternal God is thy refuge, and underneath are the everlasting arms." Psalm xlv. 1: "God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble. Therefore will not we fear, though the earth be removed, and though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea." John xiv. 27: "Peace I leave with you, My peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid." These, and many others which we might quote, are promises of God; and all the promises of God are Yea and Amen in Christ Jesus.

So we find that the Saviour, who claims to be able to save from sin, is a Saviour who claims to be able to save from care also. He who can give pardon, can also give peace; He who can still the tumult of the guilty soul, can quiet the troubled heart and give it rest.

Jesus Christ, then, is able to deal with our cares. But it is important for us to notice how He deals with them. He deals with them as He deals with our sins—by taking them upon Himself. He bids us cast all our care upon Him. That is the open secret of peace, the open secret of complete and continuous victory over this cruel enemy. When we cast all our sins upon Christ, there is no sin upon us, and so we enjoy pardon; when we cast all our care upon Christ, there is no care upon us, and so we enjoy peace. How simple it is! If we keep the cares we cannot have the peace; if we cast the cares we cannot help having the peace.

But what does it mean to cast our care on Christ? It means to recognize that Christ has made Himself responsible for the management of our life; and to trust Him with it.

Here is a ship making its way through an intricate and dangerous channel. We look for the captain, and see him on the bridge. On him depends the safety of hundreds of lives and thousands of pounds' worth of property. Everything shows how keenly he feels his responsibility. Time after time he stops the vessel, heaves the lead, and anxiously scrutinizes the chart. A little later we look for him, and find him on the deck, chatting with the passengers, and laughing merrily at their stories. From his face every shade of care has gone. What has happened? Has the vessel cleared the dangerous channel? Oh, no. But the pilot has come on board, and because the captain has perfect confidence in him, he has cast all the care of the ship on him.



The pilot has the care, and the captain has the peace.

Thus our Lord would have us deal with all the cares of our life. He longs to have them. He wants us to have such perfect confidence in His love for us, that we shall roll the whole burden of life over on Him. It is to this He calls us. Of our cares He says, "Bring them hither to Me." "Cast thy burden on the Lord, and He shall sustain thee." "Casting all your care upon Him, for He careth for you." But if we obey this command, we cannot help having peace. Trust and worry are obviously incompatible. Where trust begins worry ends; where worry begins trust ends. He who trusts does not worry; he who worries does not trust. Perfect committal, perfect confidence, means perfect peace. When we cast all, He cares for all. When in everything, by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving, our requests are made known unto God, the peace of God that passeth

all understanding keeps our hearts and minds. When weary and heavy laden we come to Him, we find rest.

But now, having dealt with the matter generally, let us take it up somewhat in detail. Let us bring some of the actual cares of our life to the Lord, that we may see how He will deal with them. Is your daily bread your care? With some of you here this evening it is. You are poor, very poor, and perhaps the heaviest burden that lies on you is the providing of food for those you love. Business is bad; work is scarce, the money is gone; the stock of food in the home deplorably low. You do not know how the home is to be kept going, and how the children are to be fed. To fill the many mouths you have but a paltry five loaves and two fishes. The care is a heavy care; the trouble a heavy trouble. Now, how does the Master deal with a case like this? Looking at your scanty supplies, at the loaves and fishes which

seem so paltry, He says: "Bring them hither to Me." And as you bring them, you begin to see the reason why He has brought you into such straits. He has brought you to the end of your invisible resources. And as you lay before Him your meager store, He says to you, "Fear thou not, for I am with thee; be not dismayed, for I am thy God." And as you hear these words you begin to realize that you are not so poor as you thought you were. You have five loaves and two fishes—and God, the God who feeds the ravens, who clothes the grass of the field, before whom not even a sparrow is forgotten. In thy poverty and straitness believe it. The Creator of the ends of the earth says to thee, "Fear not, I am thy God." Take Him at His word. Commit thy way unto the Lord, trust also in Him. Then though you have come to the last handful of meal in the barrel, and to the last drop of oil in the cruse, you will be able to sing in perfect peace,

“The Lord is my Shepherd; I shall not want.”

Is your health your care? Have you been sent into life to bear through it all the burden of a weak and sickly body? Are your days full of weariness and pain, and your nights passed in tossing restlessness? Do you feel the influence of your bodily weakness upon your mind, making you fretful, impatient, and irritable? Is the instrument with which you have to work proving utterly unequal to the work it has to do? Then, indeed, you have a real care and a heavy one in your life. But can the Master deal with it? Yes, He can. Of this care, as of the others, He says, “Bring it hither to Me.” This burden He can and will carry. Weak, sickly, bent as you are, He can so fill you with His grace that your feeble health will seem to you a crown rather than a cross; and like Paul you will glory in your infirmity, that the

power of Christ may the more abundantly rest on you.

Or is your work your care? Is it there that the source of fret and worry in your life is to be found? With many of you it is. You feel you could be perfectly quiet and peaceful, if it were not for the strain put upon you by your daily work. You are engaged at home. The work is hard, the things to be done endless, the days foggy and depressing, so the whole thing upsets you. Or you are in a shop, and the customers are so inconsiderate, so unreasonable, so utterly tiresome, that they get on your nerves. Or perhaps you are a student with endless examinations before you, and the necessity of passing them leaving you scarcely a moment's peace. Or you may be a minister, and God knows what opportunities there are for worry in a minister's life, as he tries to deal with the spiritual troubles of from five hundred to six hundred different persons, and at-

tempts the utterly impossible task of being preacher, pastor, and organizer in one. Our work often is a heavy care to us. It worries us, it wears us out, it cuts deep furrows upon our brows. Yet it need not do this. The Master can deal with this care also, if we cast it on Him. He can keep us sweet and calm amid the most exasperating circumstances, or amid the severest pressure. He was busy as none of us are busy, He was tried in His work as none of us are tried, yet His peace nothing could destroy. And He has said, "Peace I leave with you, My peace I give unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid."

Is your reputation and character your care? It may be so. This is a real care to many. They have to bear the burden of misunderstanding and of misrepresentation. Their motives are called in question, their words misconstrued, their actions misinterpreted, their characters maligned. Evil, uncharitable, and bitter

things are said about them. How hard all this is to bear some of us know well. The fact is that to some natures misrepresentation and misunderstanding seem the most terrible of all evils. They are proud, jealous of their good name, intensely sensitive of what people think of them, so the slightest word of disapproval fills them with vexation. Are you burdened with this care? Then bring it to Jesus. He well knows how to deal with it. This was one of the heaviest burdens He had to bear. He was despised and rejected of men. He came to His own, and His own received Him not. Pure and holy as He was, He was called a gluttonous man and a winebibber, and a blasphemer, and a devil. The vilest motives were imputed to Him, and at last He was nailed to the cross as a villain. If He suffered so, you and I may be patient under what we are called to suffer. We may even rejoice if we are called in this way to fellowship with His



sufferings. Commit your character, your name, your reputation to the Lord. Study to show yourself approved of Him. And then let the mongrel dogs and petty curs of this world bark at you as they may; in the approval of God you will have perfect peace.

Or, finally, are your children your care? Many of you are parents, and one of your chief cares is the welfare of your children. You long with passionate anxiety to see them decided Christians. You fear that some of them are as yet far from Christ.

It may be that you have good ground for your fear. An evil heart of unbelief has manifested itself in them, and a stubborn will that will not be controlled. For your comfort, let me turn you to the story of the lunatic boy in the gospels. There was a father terribly troubled about his child. From infancy a devil had possessed that boy. His condition was a daily and an hourly care to his

parents. At last, in his agony, that man went to the Lord Jesus Christ. And what did the Lord say to him? "Bring your boy hither to Me." Is your boy a demoniac? Has the devil of lust got him? Has the devil of drink got him? Has the devil of gambling got him? Has the devil of infidelity got him? Is he possessed in any way? Then bring him to Jesus. That is the only cure for your care. And when you have brought him to Jesus and besought the Master to help, do not take him away. Leave him at the feet of the Lord. The Lord may take quite a long time to heal him, but let your faith be strong, giving glory to God. Be not afraid, only believe. In answer to believing, patient prayer the devil will go out.

So the Lord deals with our cares. He bids us bring them to Him, cast them upon Him, and in exchange for our cares He gives us His peace. So the secret for overcoming care is twofold. It lies

in giving the cares, and taking the peace. We often bring our cares to the Lord Jesus; we lay them at His feet, we tell Him all about them, and ask Him to deliver us from them, and then having finished our prayer we take up our cares, buckle them on to our shoulders, and go away again. Buckle on the Lord's peace, and leave the cares where you put them first. And the secret of this buckling on the peace is trust in the promises of God. Real faith in God's promises will lead to expectation of their fulfilment, and will bring all the blessing of these promises in power into our life.

### III

## JESUS AND OUR TEMPTATIONS



### III

#### JESUS AND OUR TEMPTATIONS

*"And the Lord said, Simon, Simon, behold, Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat: but I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not."*—LUKE xxii. 31, 32.

We are dealing with various aspects of the work of the Lord Jesus Christ as Saviour. The claim which Jesus Christ makes upon the human race is a unique claim. It is one of the evidences of His consciousness of deity. As Jehovah of old said to Israel, "I am God, and beside Me there is none else;" so Jesus Christ through His servant declares, "Neither is there salvation in any other; for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved." Jesus Christ claims to be the only Saviour.

## 44 Jesus and Our Temptations

But He who claims to be the only Saviour must prove Himself to be the all-sufficient Saviour. He cannot ask for man's sole devotion, unless He can meet man's every need. If, in human life, a crisis should ever arise, with which Jesus Christ proved utterly unable to deal, He would at once lose His hold on the race. He would be deposed from His unique place as *the* Saviour, and take His place as *a* Saviour of men.

We have already spoken of how He deals with our sins and our cares ; we are now to see how He deals with our temptations.

Temptation is probably the most familiar and the most general experience of the spiritual life. As I once said, describe the spiritual life as a life of temptation, and you will get more people to assent to your description, than to any other which you can frame. All are not wise, all are not foolish, all are not joyful, all are not sorrowful, but all are



tempted. To be spiritually alive, and to be exempt from temptation, is in this world impossible. Complete immunity from temptation would be an evidence of spiritual death. We are all tempted, and if Jesus Christ is to save us, there is no direction in which His saving power will be more continually called upon, than in the direction of delivering us from temptation. How fully He Himself recognized this, is proved by the prayer which He taught His disciples, bidding them as regularly as they prayed for daily bread, to pray, "Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one."

In dealing with this subject of temptation three things call for attention:

1. The Nature of Temptation.
2. The Sources of Temptation.
3. The Way of Succor.

1. The Nature of Temptation. Temptation is, in its nature, a very simple thing. To tempt means simply to try. The words are the same, the difference

being that while we apply the word "try" to persons and things, we use the word "tempt" of persons alone. The idea at the root of the word is to pierce, or to explore. To tempt a man, in the most literal sense, means to pierce through the outer husk, to break through the outer shell, that we may discover what lies within. To tempt is to test with the view of discovering the true nature.

This is unquestionably the original idea. It is important for us to bear it in mind, for it throws light upon two matters vital to the understanding of this whole question.

(a) It enables us to understand why temptation should be so universal. We all acknowledge that what God is aiming at in His salvation is the formation of character. But, at every stage in the building of character, the character must be tested. Only thus will the good in it and the evil in it be revealed. God is aiming at presenting us faultless. He

must test us to see what we are, and temptation is His means of testing us. Temptation is universal, because temptation is a necessary process in the testing and the revelation of character.

(b) Further, attention to the original meaning of the word will enable us to understand the distinction between temptation and sin. Many fail to understand this. Many who are exceptionally tempted, think that their temptations are evidence of exceptional wickedness on their part, and they get grievously discouraged. So far is this from being the truth, that exceptional temptation is usually rather a sign of exceptional grace. Without doubt the sinless One was the most tempted of all.

When a great gun has been built for our navy, before it is put on board ship it is subjected to most severe tests. Heavy charges are fired from it. If the gun is sound, no harm occurs. If the gun has a flaw in it, it bursts. But the testing

of the gun is something quite distinct from the bursting of the gun. The testing was all right, the bursting was all wrong. The testing did not make the flaw, but it revealed the flaw. Now temptation is to sin, as the testing of the gun to the bursting of the gun. There is no sin in temptation; the sin lies in giving way to it.

But, while what I have said so far is undoubtedly the literal and primary meaning of temptation, I do not forget that the word has a secondary meaning, and that it is this secondary meaning that it ordinarily bears on our lips. In this secondary sense temptation means solicitation to evil. To tempt a man, is to seek to draw him aside from the path of right. It is interesting to see how the two senses of the word are related. We have already seen that temptation is universal, because it is a necessary factor in the process of character-making. But the character of a man is ever determined

by his will. A man is what his will is. The essential of a good character, the foundation on which it all rests, is a will wholly given up to God. In order to discover what a man is, his will must be tested. Temptation is, therefore, always directed to the will. It may come through various avenues, but this is its goal. And the question raised by every temptation is this: whether the human will, in all circumstances, will choose the will of God. This is temptation in the sense of testing. But when, in the testing, there is influence brought to bear on the will to turn it aside from the will of God, then the temptation becomes not only testing, but solicitation to evil. The essence and heart of every evil temptation is the appeal that it makes to turn aside from the will of God.

The temptations that assault a man may be almost infinite in their variety, but their nature is ever the same. It is of temptation in this secondary sense of

## 50 Jesus and Our Temptations

solicitation to evil that we now speak. Having seen what the nature of sin is, we come to deal with—

2. The Sources of Temptation. Whence come those solicitations to evil which are such a source of trouble to the people of God? Mainly from three sources :

(a) The first source of temptation is the flesh, the self, or, as Paul puts it, the “sin that dwelleth in me.” As every man with any spiritual experience knows, we are our own worst enemies ; we are members of a fallen race. We are hereditary enemies of God, and opposed to His will. Sin has entrenched itself in our nature, and, from within, it wars against God. Into many of our worst sins we are led by the promptings of this disordered nature. Bodily appetites, in themselves not only sinless, but necessary to the continued existence of the individual and of the race, become the occasions of gluttony, drunkenness, and lust. Sin working on

self-love, which is necessary to the preservation of our lives, tempts to selfishness; working on self-respect, it tempts to pride; working on self-regard, it tempts to self-indulgence. This flesh, this self, is our most persistent and relentless foe. This is the most constant, and fruitful, source of temptation. From this we never get away. As Owen points out in his masterly treatise on *Indwelling Sin*, self as a source of temptation has many advantages. It is always present, always active; it knows its ground, it is utterly deceitful, and it has the prestige of victory.

(b) The second source of temptation is the world. Our circumstances often act powerfully upon us, to lead us into sin. Put a hungry man near food—the result is a temptation to steal. Put a poor man near gold—the result is a temptation to theft. Put an angry man near the man he hates—the result is a temptation to murder. Put a gossiping

woman into a group like herself—the result is a temptation to evil-speaking. The circumstances influence the self greatly. The environment in which we live, while in this world, is largely hostile to God. It is adverse to the promotion of holiness. Hence we are bidden not to be conformed to the world.

(c) The third source of temptation is the devil. A vast number of our temptations have their origin, not in self, bad as self is, not in circumstances, trying as these may be, but in the inspiration of the wicked one. The Scripture clearly reveals the existence of the tempter, and speaks of his power to influence the minds of men. He is the great adversary of God, and therefore of the people of God. And into their minds he flings his fiery darts. Between his suggestions and the workings of our own mind it is often impossible, as Bunyan shows in his immortal story, to distinguish. But, in connection with the whole question of



temptation, it is of vital importance to remember, that we have arrayed against us the great adversary who at first led man away from God, and who ever since has been striving to keep man in bondage to sin. But, passing from the sources of temptation, we come to deal with—

3. The Way of Succor. Thank God, there is a way of succor. Thank God, universal as temptation is, persistent as it is, we need never fall before it. Let us say that again, that it may sink into our mind. Universal as temptation is, persistent as it is, we need never fall before it. Christ the alone Saviour of men is the all-sufficient Saviour of men. He can deal with our temptations as perfectly as He has dealt with our sins. Over all the power of the enemy He can give us power. Listen to what He says in His Word. Putting it generally, He says, "*My grace is sufficient for thee.*" Putting it specifically, He says, "In that

He Himself hath suffered, being tempted, He is able to succor them that are tempted." And in order that there may be no mistake as to the measure of the succor He says, "There hath no temptation taken you, but such as is common to man; but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able, but will with the temptation also make a way of escape, that ye may be able to bear it."

The actual manner in which Christ succors the tempted soul differs greatly in different cases. The modes of succor are almost as various as the modes of assault.

(a) Sometimes Christ succors the tempted soul by creating within it a disgust at the sin to which it is tempted, and awakening the soul to the full horror of the guilt involved in committing it. Of this we have a supreme example in the case of Joseph. Here was a child of God placed in the most difficult cir-

cumstances conceivable. To lead him into sin the devil, the world, and the flesh combined. To yield was a thousand times easier than to resist. But in upon his soul there was flashed a vision of what the sin meant, and, rising in horror, he fled, crying out, "How can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?"

(*b*) Sometimes Christ succors the soul by removing the temptation which threatens to become irresistible. Countless mysterious providences find their explanation in this. The Christian man, who is tempted by his riches to forget God, is saved by the loss of his riches; a mother, tempted to idolize a child, is saved by the death of the child; a minister, tempted to pride, and tempted to sell his conscience for popularity, is saved by seeing his popularity ebbing quickly away. What infinite comfort there is in all this! No temptation can reach us except with the permission of the Lord. He is our King. He can not only subdue

us to Himself, He can not only rule and defend us, but He can restrain and conquer all His and our enemies.

(c) Some souls Christ succors by giving them additional supplies of grace in the hour of trial. This is His most ordinary, and most blessed way of succor. It is the fact that He succors in this way that enables us to glory in tribulation, and to count it all joy when we fall into divers temptations. Of this we have illustrations in the case of Daniel and Paul. Daniel, by the decree of Darius, is placed in a position of the gravest peril, and tempted to abstain from prayer; but grace is given to him to open his windows and pray to his God, even though his prayer brings him to the lions' den. Paul is, by the thorn in the flesh, tempted to impatience and rebellion; but when the promise is given, "My grace is sufficient for thee," Paul cries, "Most gladly will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me."

(*d*) Some Christ succors by His own strong intercession for them in the hour of their trial, and by the most tender and compassionate forgiveness, when they have fallen before the temptation. Of this method of succor the great example is Peter. There is no more instructive instance of temptation and succor in the Word of God. I add the word "succor" advisedly. Remember what our Lord said: "Simon, Simon, behold Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat; but I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not." Had it not been for that prayer, and the tender look in the moment of betrayal, and the full and complete forgiveness after the resurrection, Peter would have made a shipwreck as awful as that of Judas. And what Christ did for Peter He does for us.

In such, and many other ways, Christ succors us, that in the hour of temptation we may stand. Let us learn to trust Him. And while we ever pray, "Lead us not

into temptation," let us not be afraid. For if, in the way of duty, we meet temptation, God will not suffer us to fall. We shall be holden up, for God is able to make us stand.

# IV

## JESUS AND OUR DOUBTS





## IV

### JESUS AND OUR DOUBTS

*"And immediately Jesus stretched forth His hand, and caught him, and said unto him, O thou of little faith, wherefore didst thou doubt?"—MATT. xiv. 31.*

In our consideration of the Saviour and His salvation, we have already spoken of our sins, our cares, and our temptations. We are to speak now of our doubts. Doubt is an important feature in spiritual experience, and the Saviour who is to be the all-sufficient Saviour, must show Himself able to deal with this also.

The doubts of which I speak are the doubts of the children of God. I am not to deal with the struggles of those who are seekers after God, much less with the difficulties put forward by those who

are infidels. I wish to deal with the doubts of those who have had faith, but whose faith has grown weak, and threatens to give way altogether. The experience I wish to deal with is not the experience of the man who dwells in darkness, but of the man who, having been in the light, has for the time passed into the darkness.

In dealing with this subject we notice :

1. That all believers have their times of doubt. The experience of doubt is practically universal. The Son of Man has never yet found a perfect faith on the earth. This fact, while it must never be allowed to make us contented to remain in doubt, should save us from being panic-stricken, and from concluding that, because we are in the darkness now, we shall never see the light again. Oh child of God! at present troubled and distressed by doubt of your Father's power, wisdom, and love, "there hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to

man." Through the waters, in which you are almost overwhelmed, well-nigh every child of God has passed. Look at Abraham. He was the father of the faithful, the foremost among the heroes of faith. Yet when he goes down to Egypt he loses hold of God, and, doubting God's power to protect him, resorts to subterfuge and lying.

Look at David. His faith in God made him strong and courageous as a lion. He could sing, "The Lord is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear? the Lord is the strength of my life, of whom shall I be afraid?" Yet there comes a time when his faith is eclipsed, when all hope dies out of his breast, and in his despondency he cries, "I shall one day perish by the hands of Saul."

Look at Elijah. He is a giant among men. By his prayers he seals and opens the heavens. By his courage and zeal he turns a whole nation back to God. Yet, on the very eve of his most glorious

triumph, we see him flying for his life from the threat of a woman, flinging himself down under a bush, and praying that he may die.

Look at Paul. The mightiest man of faith that ever lived. Yet he had his times of doubt. Listen to his words: "We would not have you ignorant of the trouble that came to us in Asia: that we were pressed out of measure, above strength, so that we despaired even of life." And again: "When we were come into Macedonia our flesh had no rest, but we were troubled on every side; without were fightings, within were fears. Nevertheless, God that comforteth those that were cast down, comforted us." There speaks a soul that knew the darkness of doubt, that had lived through a storm, when the anchors were like to give, and the soul to make utter shipwreck of its faith. Do not, therefore, be too much discouraged, if doubt and darkness cover your souls. God will not suf-

fer you to be tried above what you are able to bear. He will make a way of escape. He has done it for others; He will do it for you. Your case is not an isolated nor a unique one. All have their times of doubt.

But while we should not be too much discouraged by our doubts, we cannot be too earnest in getting rid of them. Joy in God, and power in the service of God, are impossible while doubt lasts.

But for the removing of our doubts, there is nothing better than to trace these doubts to their origin. This we shall now strive to do.

2. The sources of doubt are as various as the influences that lead the heart of men away from God. But they all fall into one or other of two great classes.

On the one hand there are the objective sources of doubt, on the other hand there are the subjective sources of doubt.

(a) The objective sources of doubt are those which lie outside ourselves, and

for which we are not directly responsible. Unquestionably many of our doubts are traceable to our circumstances. Events occurring in our lives force from us the unbelieving cry, "Can God?" or the bitter cry, "Why does God?" These objective sources of doubt are as various as our circumstances.

(i.) Danger is one of them. It was in presence of great danger that the faith of Abraham, David, and Peter broke down. When death looked into their faces, their faith gave way; and Abraham stooped to lying, David to flight, Peter to the denial of his Lord.

(ii.) Specially difficult work is another. Of this we have illustrations in the case of most of the prophets. At the bottom of their hesitation and fear about their work, was doubt of the power of God. In face of their task they were filled with fear, a fear that hid God from them.

(iii.) Loss of possessions is another

source of doubt. Under the blow of financial disaster the faith of many has given way utterly. Where they thought they were trusting in God, they were really trusting in the bank; and when the bank failed nothing was left to the soul but despair. How real the strain poverty puts on faith, some of us know! When the barrel of meal is empty, and the cruse of oil dry, the Sermon on the Mount is terribly hard reading.

(iv.) Loss of reputation, especially when it occurs through an unjust slander, is a fearful source of doubt. This has plunged some of God's truest servants into the deepest darkness. They could trust God with their money, and gladly part with it all. But they could not trust Him with their character; and when God allowed that to be touched, their faith gave way. They could enter into fellowship with Christ in His poverty, but not in His reproach.

(v.) Loss of friends is another fruit-

ful source of religious doubt. By every bereavement the faith of some of God's children is imperiled. Ask a mother to believe in the love of God, when she is breaking her heart over the death of a child, and she will almost drive you from her in anger. It seems impossible to believe it. It seems almost wrong to suggest it. The snapping of ties so sacred, by the cruel hand of death, often shatters faith for years. The sorrow which bereavement brings with it blinds the eyes to the love and to the power of God.

(*b*) The subjective sources of doubt are those which lie within ourselves. Many of the most troublesome of our doubts spring from what we are. These subjective sources of doubt are of two kinds: those which are blameless, and those which are blameworthy. Of the former class ignorance is an example. No doubt there is an ignorance which is blameworthy, but there is also an ignorance which is a necessary consequence



of the limitation of our being. We are but creatures. We cannot understand God; we cannot fathom His purposes. And thus our ignorance leads us to ask questions which we cannot answer, questions the very asking of which leads to doubt. And of the same character is weariness. If we work hard we cannot but get weary, and he who is weary is certain to be assaulted with doubt.

"Oh, it is hard to work for God,  
To rise and do one's part  
Upon this battlefield of earth,  
And never once lose heart."

The history of Elijah furnishes us with a classical example, of how over-work, and the weariness that follows it, may cause an eclipse of faith. But more important, and more numerous than the blameless sources of doubt, are those for which we are blameworthy. Of these we may mention four.

(i.) The first is pride. No proud man has ever been strong in faith. God re-

sisteth the proud and giveth grace to the lowly. Pride is a continual source of doubt. In your pride is the explanation of your spiritual difficulties. You have never surrendered your will to Christ; you have never acknowledged Him as Master over your whole life. Hence the spiritual darkness in which you are involved. You say you cannot believe. Christ says: "How can you believe, who receive honor one from another, and seek not the honor that cometh from God only?" Between pride and unbelief the connection is most intimate. For this reason He who told us that faith is the key which opens the door of life has also said, "Except ye be converted and become as little children, ye shall in no wise enter the kingdom of heaven."

(ii.) The second blamable source of doubt I shall mention is laziness. "The devil tempts the busy," says the proverb, "but the idle tempt the devil to tempt them." And his favorite temptation is

to doubt. It is impossible to have our faith vigorous unless we exercise it. But the lazy Christians in our churches, who do nothing for Christ, have no opportunities of exercising their faith. What wonder, then, if they are assailed by doubts? It is easy to doubt the power of Christ to save and satisfy men's souls, when, through laziness, we never put Him to the test.

(iii.) A still more dangerous source of doubt is worldliness. There is an irreconcilable antagonism between this world and God. The Bible recognizes this, and states it with the utmost frankness. "Whosoever," says James, "will be the friend of the world, makes himself the enemy of God." "If any man love the world," says John, "the love of the Father is not in him." From this it follows that the more the world is to us, the less God is to us. The more real the present is to us, the less real the future. The tighter hold we have of things seen

and temporal, the lighter hold we have of things unseen and eternal. In the will unsundered to God, and in the heart set upon this world, may be found the sources of three-fourths of the doubts among professing Christians to-day.

(iv.) And the last blamable source of doubt which we shall mention is prayerlessness. This is closely connected with the previous one, for the worldly Christian is ever a prayerless Christian. Prayer means communion with God, and, as we commune with Him, He becomes more and more real to us. It is the man who does not pray that doubts. To men like George Muller and Hudson Taylor God is more real than their own existence. They see Him day by day working in answer to prayer, and for them doubt is impossible.

Such, then, are some of the sources, blameless and blameworthy, from which our doubts arise. This leads to our next point.

3. While the sources of doubt are various, the mode of deliverance is one. From all our doubts Jesus can deliver us; and the way in which He does it is by a fresh revelation of Himself. Doubt is largely the child of ignorance. To know Christ is necessarily to trust Him. To know Him perfectly, would be to trust Him perfectly. We cannot possibly stand before Him, and see Him in His glory, without at once feeling that He is perfectly able to meet all our need. It is because we forget our Lord, or because we lose sight of Him for the time, that we doubt. Every fresh revelation of Him means fresh access of faith. So, a new revelation of Jesus Christ to our souls will dissipate all our doubts, whether they rise from objective or subjective sources, whether they spring from things without or within ourselves. Apply this principle to the sources of doubt of which we have spoken.

Has danger caused you to doubt?

What you need is to hear the voice of Jesus saying, "It is I; be not afraid." When Abraham was overwhelmed with fear, at the enemies which his conflict with the kings had raised up against him, he was quieted by a fresh revelation of God to his soul, saying, "Fear not, Abraham; I am thy shield, and thy exceeding great reward." When Peter saw that the wind was boisterous and he was beginning to sink, what saved him was the touch of Jesus recalling him to the Lord, whom for the moment he had lost sight of. In each case the new revelation was the end of doubt.

Has the strain of work caused you to doubt? What you need is a new revelation of the Lord as the One who has sent you to work. By this revelation Moses, Elijah, Isaiah, and Paul were delivered from their doubts and fears.

Or do your doubts spring from worldliness, and neglect of prayer? What you need, to cure you of both, and to bring

you into a life of joyful faith in the Son of God, is, that the glory of Christ should be revealed to your soul by the Holy Spirit. You cannot see Jesus without loving Him. If His glory once bursts upon you, He will ravish your heart, and in that moment the world will lose its charm. You will not have to give up the world. It will drop out of your life, which has been filled with God. And then prayer, which before was a toil, neglected upon every possible occasion, will become the outpouring of a soul so full that it cannot but speak.

To teach us this great lesson—that the solution of all our doubts is to be found in the revelation of God to the soul—one of the grandest books in the whole Bible was written. The book of Job is the record of how a soul found its way from the darkness of doubt, in which it blasphemed God, to a faith in which it worshiped God. And that book shows us that the victory of faith was not won

by God giving an intellectual answer to the questions as to His justice and wisdom which Job had raised. The victory of faith was won, though the revelation which God gave of Himself to His servant. He came to His servant and said, "Job, here I am. Can you doubt My power, My wisdom, My love?" And Job fell on his face, overwhelmed with shame that even for a moment, in his sorest agony, he should have doubted his God. And lying on his face before his God, whose compassion and tenderness he now for the first time adequately recognizes, he sobs out: "I had heard of Thee with the hearing of the ear, but now mine eye seeth Thee; wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes." So may it be in God's great mercy with every doubting and troubled soul.



V

JESUS AND OUR CROSSES



## V

### JESUS AND OUR CROSSES

*"And when He had called the people unto Him with His disciples also, He said unto them, Whosoever will come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me."*—MARK viii. 34.

The subject which is before us is an intensely practical one. We have already seen that the Christian life is pre-eminently a life of temptation, and that the Christian's Saviour is one who is able to succor those who are tempted. Now among our temptations there is no class more numerous or more dangerous, than those to which we give the name crosses. Every life has its crosses, and we have to consider what these crosses are, and how we have to deal with them. This will involve our dealing with several questions.

1. We ask, what is a cross? It is not a sinful disposition or an evil habit. To call either of these a cross, is to make a thoroughly inaccurate and mischievous use of the word. Yet many people do this. Here is a man with a hot and quick temper. You tell him that he ought not to lose his temper. He replies, "I cannot help it. I was born with it. I am naturally quick. It is a great cross to me, but I suppose I must bear it." Here is a woman with an anxious disposition, that predisposes her to worry. You tell her that she ought not to worry. She replies, "I cannot help it. I am naturally anxious. It is a great cross to me, but I suppose I must bear it." And what some say of anger and worry, others say of envy and pride, and the habit of exaggerating, or the vice of evil speaking. But between all such things and crosses there is a profound distinction. Crosses are to be borne; sins are to be laid aside. Therefore, from what Scripture says

about anything, we can at once judge whether it is a sin or a cross. Is temper a cross? Paul settles that forever when he says, "Let all bitterness and wrath and anger be put away from you." Temper is therefore a sin, and has to be laid aside. Is worry a cross? Peter settles that when he says, "Cast all your cares"—or, as it might be exactly translated, "worries"—"on Him, for He careth for you." Worries are also to be laid aside. Is the habit of exaggeration a cross? Paul answers that by saying, "Wherefore, putting away all lying, speak every man truth to his neighbor." Crosses are not sins, and sins are not crosses. The two things must be kept distinct in the mind. To confuse them can only work mischief, by leading us to tolerate in our lives things that ought to be instantly renounced.

Further, a cross is not a great sorrow or calamity. To an overwhelming and crushing blow the word is not properly

applied. When we speak of the crosses of daily life, we do not mean the disasters and calamities of life. There is the same sort of distinction between a calamity and a cross, as between a scratched finger and a broken limb. No general in the field would dream of including mosquito bites in the list of casualties, although to the army, as a whole, the misery caused by the mosquito bites might be immensely greater than that caused by bullet wounds.

A cross is a fret, a contrary thing occurring in our life. It is something that comes across our path, something that hinders us and thwarts us in fulfilment of our will. It is something of which this is always certain—that we do not wish it, and we do not like it. This element of contrariness is essential to the idea of the cross. It comes into our life without our consent, without our being consulted. Of a true cross we can always say, "I cannot help it." If we

could help it, and deliberately choose it, it is not a cross.

(1) Our crosses are of two kinds. They are acute or they are chronic.

(a) What I call acute crosses, are isolated circumstances which try us sorely, but whose effect is temporary. Such, for example, is the missing of a train. You have to fulfil an important engagement and are driving to the station. Suddenly the horse goes lame, and you reach the station just in time to see the train move out. That is a cross. It is something occurring to you of which you are perfectly certain that you did not wish it, and that you do not like it. Such things we experience every day. You travel across London to call on a friend, and, after spending hours in reaching his house, find that, five minutes before you reached, he went out. You are reading an intensely interesting book, and wish above all things to be left alone to see how the story ends, or how the plot de-

velops, when father or mother calls you to do something disagreeable. You arrange for a picnic, and are looking forward to a day of the purest enjoyment, and wake in the morning to find the rain falling in torrents, and all hope of enjoyment destroyed. These things are crosses. We do not wish them, but there they are.

(*b*) What I call chronic crosses, are permanent conditions of life—conditions which try us sorely, and whose effect upon us endures, it may be, for years.

Poverty is such a cross. How heavily it bears on some, many of us have no conception. To have, every day, wants occurring that you cannot supply, claims that you cannot meet, desires that you cannot gratify, to be hindered and hampered in the developing of your soul's life at every turn by the pressure of circumstances, is an unspeakably heavy cross. Ill health is another such cross.



It cramps and hinders some, as much as poverty hinders others.

Contact with uncongenial persons is another. What some people suffer by having to live with others God only knows. This is one of the most fruitful sources of trouble in life. By an unfortunate marriage, earth may be turned into hell for husband and wife through a long term of years. By an inconsiderate, selfish, complaining parent, a son or daughter may be brought to the very verge of madness. The life of a mistress may be made miserable by her servants; or the life of servants by an unreasonable mistress. A Christian daughter in a worldly house may suffer persecution worse than that of the rack. An evangelical preacher by the contempt poured on him by his brethren may be almost crushed. This kind of cross is one from which none of us altogether escapes. Every one of us, as we go through life, finds himself linked on to some from whom he would

willingly be free, to some whose presence acts like vinegar upon a wound. He would shake them off if he could. But he cannot. Their relation to him has a permanent effect. It is a chronic cross.

This brings us to our second point. We have seen what a cross is; we now ask:

2. What is the natural tendency of every cross?

(a) To make a bad man curse. There is a close connection between crossing and cursing. Crosses are to the bad, standing provocations to profanity. A man driving at a golf ball misses it, and immediately relieves himself with an oath. His failure to drive the ball was a cross, and the effect of it was to make him curse. A vast amount of the profanity that disgraces us as a nation may be traced to the same cause. Every cross that meets us in life reminds us that a higher will than ours is ordering all things. But when the will of God,

as indicated in circumstances, crosses the will of a bad man, he rebels against it, and the heart that is enmity against God leads him to curse.

(*b*) But what has a tendency to make a bad man curse, has a tendency to make a good man cross. A cross might almost be defined as anything whose tendency is to make us cross.

Of this effect of a cross we have an excellent illustration in the gospels. On one occasion the Lord Jesus, when traveling to Jerusalem, sent messengers before Him to prepare a place for Him in one of the villages of the Samaritans. But these Samaritans would have none of Him, and would not even let Him enter the place. Their conduct was exceedingly discourteous and annoying. And what was its effect? "When His disciples James and John saw this they said, Lord, wilt Thou that we command fire to come down from heaven and consume them as Elias did?" That was the

utterance of men thoroughly cross. They were angry and upset. What to the bad are provocations to profanity, to the good are temptations to impatience. God knows that under the temptation we, like the disciples, oftentimes give way. But let us remember that, though we are apt to give way, it is not necessary that we should give way. In this our blessed Master is our example. He had innumerable crosses to bear, and through them He maintained an unbroken calm.

This brings us to our last point:

3. How are crosses to be rightly borne? A cross, as we have seen, is a species of temptation. But temptation is never an unmixed evil. Otherwise the apostle could never have said, "Count it all joy when ye fall into manifold temptations." A cross, like other temptations, may be the occasion of spiritual damage, but it may also be the occasion of spiritual benefit. Every cross either lifts us nearer God, or drives us farther from

Him. In every cross a blessing and a curse lie hidden. Which we actually receive depends entirely on the use we make of it.

If from our crosses we are to receive the blessing they are fitted to bestow, two things are necessary :

(a) We must recognize that our crosses come from God, and that each of them, however small, has a purpose. If we are the children of God this is absolutely true. The devil can fling no cross in our path without the permission of our Father. He who guards the sparrow's fall, arranges the minutest details of His children's lives. And He arranges them with a purpose. Everything that happens to us is part of a wise and loving plan. As every blow of the sculptor in hewing a statue has a purpose, and helps in some measure to the realization of the thought in the sculptor's mind, so every circumstance in the believer's life has a purpose, and helps towards his con-

formity to the image of the Lord Jesus. We must therefore learn to see God in everything. So everything will become a means of furthering our communion with God.

Of two purposes for which God sends crosses into our lives we may speak specially :

(i.) Some crosses God lays on us in order to discipline us. They are sent to us to reveal the weak points and places in our experiences. A sudden financial loss will reveal the hold that the world has upon us ; a slight cast upon us by a friend, will unveil the pride of our heart ; a slur cast upon our reputation, will show how far we are seeking in our work *only* the glory of God. But all this is simply invaluable for our growth in grace.

(ii.) Some crosses God sends into our life in order to keep us from unseen evil. Of this we have an illustration in the case of Balaam and his ass. That ass's stubbornness was a great cross to

the prophet, and caused him to curse his beast. But he afterwards found that that stubbornness had saved his life. A friend of my own once left his railway carriage to speak to me. While he was speaking to me the train moved off and left him behind. He was at first greatly annoyed, but when he heard afterwards of a serious accident which happened to that train, an accident which might have cost him his life, he could thank God for that unwelcome and unlooked-for upsetting of his plans. To remember that every cross comes from God, and is sent with a purpose, is to put ourselves in the position for obtaining the blessing of the cross.

But, again, if we would be blessed by our crosses—

(*b*) We must accept them. The cross lies in the path of every one. When you meet it do not kick against it, do not murmur at it, do not try to evade it or escape. Take it up and bear it after your

Lord. Say, "This is what the Lord has sent me, and He knows best." And when you treat your crosses thus, it is astonishing how light they become. What looked at first so rough and cruel, becomes a means by which you are led into new and deeper fellowship with your Lord.



## VI

### JESUS AND OUR BEREAVEMENTS



## VI

### JESUS AND OUR BEREAVEMENTS

MATT. ix. 18. LUKE vii. 11-15. JOHN xi.

In our study of the Lord Jesus as the Saviour of man, we come now to deal with His relation to our sorrows. But, instead of dealing with sorrow generally, I wish to deal with the specific sorrow of bereavement. I do this because I believe that in this way the grace and power of our Lord will be more strikingly exhibited. If the Lord Jesus can deal with bereavement, He can deal with every other sorrow that befalls man; while, if He fails to deal with bereavement, His power to deal with other sorrows will avail us but little. Whether we have help in face of other sorrows or not, we must have help in face of this, the sorest and most terrible of all.

## 96 Jesus and Our Bereavements

In treating this matter of our bereavements, we shall deal with these questions:

1. What is it that distinguishes the sorrow of bereavement from all other sorrows?

2. What is it that specially fits the Lord Jesus for dealing with this sorrow?

3. How does the Lord Jesus deal with this sorrow?

4. When does the Lord Jesus deal with this sorrow?

The answers to these questions will give us a tolerably complete view of our glorious Lord's work, as the Comforter of His people.

1. What is it that distinguishes the sorrow of bereavement from all other sorrows?

(a) To begin with, it is a universal sorrow, as no other is universal. Other sorrows we may escape, but this we cannot escape. We all have had, or we all shall have, our bereavements.

(b) Then it is a unique sorrow. It

differs from other sorrows, as death differs from the other ills that afflict man. It is, apart from Christ, an utterly hopeless sorrow. All other blows that fall on man spare hope alive. But death spares nothing. For the man who does not know Christ, death cuts up hope by the roots. So long as hope lives a man can bear anything. No burden that does not quench hope is really intolerable. Now, in all ordinary sorrows the element of hope is left to us. Take the loss of property. That is a serious thing. That is a legitimate ground of sorrow. To be plunged from affluence to poverty is a fearful trial, especially if it occurs when the man is nearing old age. Yet it leaves hope alive. The lost property may be recovered. Or, by hard work and good fortune, a new property may be obtained. . . . Or, if not, contentment may be found even in the straitened lot.

Or, take loss of health. That is a

more serious thing. Loss of health means being shut out from much that makes life worth living. It means being excluded from winning the prizes of life, and debarred from partaking of the enjoyments of life. But it leaves hope untouched. The sick man hopes to get well, and eagerly questions the physician as to the day that is to permit him to return to work.

Or, take loss of character. That is a still more serious matter. There is no sorrow more bitter, and no cross heavier to bear, than an undeserved loss of character. But even this does not slay hope. For the slander may be removed, and the reputation, lost for the time, become all the brighter because of the temporary eclipse.

Or, take the wickedness and waywardness of those dear to us. This is perhaps the sorest sorrow of all. How many parents would rather have laid their boys and girls in the grave, than see them

growing up to live as they are living. But even in this bitter sorrow there is hope. The lost sheep may be found. The prodigal may return.

In all these cases there is hope of recovery. But death is an irrecoverable matter. It closes the question, and, apart from Christ, closes it for ever. It is this finality about it that gives bereavement a bitterness all its own.

(c) Further, the sorrow of bereavement is a peculiarly complex sorrow. The elements that enter into it and give it bitterness are very numerous.

(i.) There is, for example, the sense of our helplessness in face of death. This is one of the most awful things about a bereavement. Death is so strong, and so ruthless. It is awful to see it lay its cold hand on one who is dearer to us than life—on the mother round whom our heart clings, on the wife who is the light of our life, on the precious little darling in the cradle,—and see it stealing our

treasure away from us while we stand absolutely helpless. We call for the doctor, we weep, we pray, we wring our hands. But it is all in vain. The eye becomes dim, the limbs become cold, the breath ceases, the heart stops, and our loved one is gone.

(ii.) Then there is the sorrow at the separation. Where there is deep love, separation even for a brief period means sorrow. And the sorrow of friends in parting is not altogether removed by the fact that during their separation they can communicate with one another. But death means an absolute separation which no communication can relieve. The absence of news is one of the elements in the sorrow of bereavement.

(iii.) Then there is the sense of loneliness. At best we are terribly alone in the world. Round us are millions to whom we are of little more consequence than the mire of the streets. Only to one here and one there are we something.



They are our other selves, and in fellowship with them our life is enlarged, and we taste life's sweetest joys. But death cuts them down, and the world becomes a different place. We feel utter strangers in it.

(iv.) An additional element of bitterness in many bereavements is the fear for the future, which comes along with them. From our friends we not only receive sympathy, but succor. They not only gladden, but shield us. And when they are called away, the knowledge that we are exposed to dangers from which they have shielded us, fills us with fear. Ask a widow left with a number of little children what makes the death of her husband such a terrible blow, and she will tell you not only of sorrow at the broken companionship, but of fear of the future which looms so dark ahead.

(v.) Another element of bitterness in bereavement is, that it is apt to make us afraid of the love we have for friends

who are still spared. We dread letting our hearts twine round any one, lest that one be snatched from us. One of the dangers of bereavement is that it may narrow and harden the heart, and render us cold and bitter.

Such are some of the many things which make this sorrow the queen of all sorrows. The sorrow of bereavement is one with which no man can deal. Jesus Christ alone can deal with it. His power to deal with bereavement is one of those things which gives Him His unique place as the Saviour of men. This brings us to our second question.

2. What is it that specially fits the Lord Jesus for dealing with the sorrow of bereavement? I think there are three things.

(a) His perfect knowledge. He knows, as no one else knows, what death is. He has experienced it. He can say, "I am He that liveth and was dead." He speaks to us from the other side of

death. He knows what is going on beyond the river of death, and His perfect knowledge fits Him for comforting us.

(b) His perfect sympathy. This springs from His perfect knowledge. He not only knows what death is, but He knows what the sorrow caused by death is. This also He has experienced. He suffered bereavement Himself, and wept when Lazarus died. He knows absolutely how we feel under the blow of death.

“In every pang that rends the heart,  
The Man of Sorrows had a part;  
He sympathizes with our grief,  
And to the sufferer sends relief.”

(c) Then His perfect power. He can comfort in face of death, for He has the keys of death and of the grave. Death, before which we are powerless, is powerless before Him. He could say to the bereaved mother at Nain, “Weep not,” because He could say to the son for whom she wept, “Young man, I say unto

thee, arise." The Lord Jesus has power to comfort us in this deepest of sorrows, because He has the power to deal with that which is the cause of our sorrow. For our comfort He has perfect knowledge, perfect sympathy, perfect power. This leads us to our next question.

3. How does the Lord deal with us in saving us from the sorrow of bereavement? He does this by dealing with the various elements in bereavement which make it such a sorrow.

(a) To comfort us in our helplessness in face of death, He tells us that death is overcome. All-mighty as death seems, he has lost his power. We are dealing with a beaten foe. He tells us indeed that for the believer there is no death. "I am the resurrection and the life; He that believeth in Me, though he were dead, yet shall he live; and whosoever liveth and believeth in Me shall never die."

“It is not death to die, to leave this weary  
road;  
And midst the brotherhood on high, to be at  
home with God.”

Jesus Christ hath abolished death, and  
brought life and immortality to light  
through the Gospel.

(*b*) To comfort us in our sorrow at  
the separation He gives us the promise  
of reunion. He says to us, “The Lord  
shall descend from heaven with a shout,  
with the voice of the archangel, and with  
the trump of God; and the dead in Christ  
shall rise first. Then we which are alive  
and remain shall be caught up together  
with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord  
in the air, and so we shall ever be with  
the Lord.”

(*c*) To comfort us in our loneliness  
He gives us the promise of His own  
friendship and fellowship. He says, “I  
will never leave you nor forsake you.”  
“I will not leave you desolate, I will  
come unto you.”

(*d*) To comfort us in face of our fear of the future He gives us the assurance that He will care for us. He calls Himself the Father of the fatherless, and the Friend of the widow. To women bereaved of their husbands He sends the message, "Leave thy fatherless children, I will preserve them alive, and let thy widows trust in Me."

Thus the Lord Jesus deals with our bereavements now. But if you ask—

4. When will He deliver us from the sorrow of bereavement? the answer is that the day of final and full deliverance will be when He comes. So it was in the olden time. The advent of Jesus is the end of the sorrow of bereavement, for when Jesus comes He gives us back our dead. The daughter of Jairus died, and the heart of Jairus was broken. But the Master came and spoke the words, "Talitha Cumi," and the father received his beloved child back once more. The young man at Nain died, but when Jesus

came He robbed death of his prey and gave the son to his mother. Lazarus died, and his body lay in the grave till it stank. But Jesus came, and before His presence death and corruption fled, and from the unbroken circle of that household praise rose to God. So it will be with us all when Jesus comes.

“Oh, then, what raptured greetings on Canaan’s happy shore!  
What knitting severed friendships up, where partings are no more!  
Then eyes with joy shall sparkle, that brimmed with tears of late;  
Orphans no longer fatherless, nor widows desolate.”

But He may delay. In all the cases where He came to rescue beloved ones from the power of death, when on earth, He did delay. And the sorrowing ones could not understand why He delayed. But He understood it. So He delays now. And our hearts grow impatient, and we cry, “Oh, Lord, how long!” “Lord Jesus, come quickly.” He delays,

but the delay will not be much longer. "Yet a little while, and He that shall come will come, and will not tarry." A few short years will pass, and then He will be here. And with His advent we shall recover our blessed, beloved ones again, we shall meet in His presence and shall be forever with the Lord.



## VII

### JESUS AND OUR PERPLEXITIES



## VII

### JESUS AND OUR PERPLEXITIES

*"I am the Light of the world: He that followeth Me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life."*—JOHN viii. 12.

Perplexity is one of man's greatest evils, and guidance one of man's greatest needs. Therefore He Who claims to be the only and the all-sufficient Saviour of men, must be one able to deal with man's perplexities.

Our perplexities almost all fall into one or other of two classes. They are either intellectual perplexities,—perplexities regarding matters of knowledge; or they are moral perplexities,—perplexities regarding conduct. What? Why? are questions constantly on the lips of men, and until they are an-

swered in some way or other the human spirit cannot find rest.

1. Our intellectual perplexities, which are such a source of disquiet to us, and which often have the effect of drawing us away from God, and rendering fellowship with Him impossible, are those of two classes.

(a) There are intellectual perplexities which spring from the limitations of our present condition. In these perplexities there is no sin. That we should be puzzled and perplexed about many things around us, neither surprises nor grieves our Heavenly Father. So far are they from being sinful that they are in a sense laudable. The anxiety of the human soul to know is an evidence of its greatness. Its insatiable curiosity is one of the proofs of its divine origin. Man's being stretches out of this world into the eternities; what wonder is it, then, that while in this world he asks questions which only the eternities can answer, and that,

receiving no reply from this world, he is restless and perplexed?

At some of the mysteries which perplex us because of the limitations of our being we may now look. We shall find that the chief of them are mysteries connected with Existence.

(i.) There is, for example, the Mystery of the Divine Being. What is God? is the greatest question of the human race. But it is a question in its very nature unanswerable. None but God can answer it, for none but God knows God. Even God cannot answer it in such wise as to be understood by men. The nature of the Divine Being and the manner of the Divine Existence must remain forever a mystery. No doubt God in His Word has told us something about Himself. He has revealed Himself as Triune, as one God in three Persons. The Bible tells us of God the Father, a Person with personal attributes and personal powers; of God the Son, a Person with personal

attributes and personal powers; of God the Spirit, a Person with personal attributes and personal powers. Yet the Bible from cover to cover declares that there is but one God. This we cannot understand. It is a perplexity to us. One in Three, Three in One: it seems to our minds impossible and a contradiction. And some philosophers, with a conceit that is stupendous, have affirmed that it is impossible. As if the limits of their almost infinitesimally small minds included the whole of possible being. The mystery of the Divine Being must ever remain. If the Bible gave us a doctrine of God which we could understand, we would know that that doctrine was false. God to be a God must be so much greater than His creatures that they cannot understand Him.

(ii.) Then there is the Mystery of Human Life. That lies closer to us than the other, yet it is as unanswerable as the other. We can no more answer the

question What am I? than we can answer the question What is God? I am body, I am soul, yet how soul and body are connected so that I am one no one has ever explained. How I came into being, whence I came, how I continue to be, where my being tends, are riddles on which, apart from the revelation of God, I can get no light.

(iii.) Then there is the Mystery of Nature. That, again, is a perplexity. There is nothing more familiar to us than matter. We think we know what matter is, but we do not. The nature of matter is an insoluble riddle. How it came to be, no one can tell. There are no words more familiar to us than space and time. Yet what space and time are no one can tell. The endeavor to think the matter out leads us into the most utter perplexity.

(iv.) Then there is the Mystery of Evil: The sharpest perplexity of all. This is the perplexity that makes us

ask Why? most frequently. How has evil come into a world where a God Whose name is Love is supreme? Why does He permit it to continue? These, and such like, are questions which perplex us, and make us restless and dissatisfied.

(*b*) But, besides the intellectual perplexities which arise from the limitations of our present condition, there are perplexities which arise in consequence of our sin. These are chiefly perplexities occasioned by God's providence. God's ways are utterly mysterious to us, and at times so perplexing as almost to drive us to despair. The words are constantly on our lips: "If God be all-mighty, why does He allow this? If God be all-loving, why does He do that?" In all these perplexities about God's doings there is an element of sin. We challenge God's doings; we impeach His power or justice or love, because we do not know Him, and we do not know Him because sin



has hardened our hearts. That sin has to do with our perplexities about God's providence is made clear to us by the Scriptures. The book of Job is a great epic of perplexity. There you have a man whom God's dealing drove almost to blasphemy; there you have a man who arraigned God in terms that startle us. But, as the book ends, what do we hear Job saying? "I had heard of Thee by the hearing of the ear; but now mine eye seeth Thee, wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes." Had he seen God earlier he would not have called in question His doings. But sin had blinded his eyes.

Such, then, are our intellectual perplexities. How does Christ as the Saviour deal with them? With those that arise from the limitations of our present condition, He deals by bidding us wait, and by bestowing upon us the grace of patience. He says to us: "What ye know not now, ye shall know hereafter,"

meantime wait." For the Lord knows that these perplexities are removable only by time. We must grow, our natures must enlarge, expand, and become stronger ere we can understand these mysteries. An intelligent child may be greatly puzzled by the movement of the heavenly bodies, and may long to know about them. But the father, however able and willing, cannot explain to the child. He must wait till the child be grown. We are but children, we ask thousands of questions the answering of which we are not yet able to understand. And Christ bids us trust Him and wait.

The intellectual difficulties which are the result of sin, Christ deals with by dealing with the sin which has caused them. The eyes which sin has darkened He enlightens; the ears which sin has stopped He opens. He brings us into such fellowship with God that we come to understand His purposes, and see the reasons for which He acts. But this is

only possible when we have become the friends of God. It is only possible after, in truest surrender, we have given up our wills to Him. Half our difficulties and doubts about God's ways are caused by self-will. Were we truly surrendered to God's will, He would give us such light on His doings as would remove our perplexity. See how it was with some of the saints of old. Of Abraham God said: "Shall I hide from Abraham that which I do?" Here was a man living so near to God that God could make him a confidant. To Daniel, because he lived so near God, and was so utterly given up to God's will, God could unroll the scroll of the future. When we have the mind of Christ, the ways of Christ are wonderfully plain to us.

But in our life there are not only intellectual perplexities, or perplexities about matters of knowledge:—

2. There are moral perplexities, or perplexities about matters of conduct. For

those who are the children of God these are sorer perplexities than the others. We can afford to do without knowledge. For that we can wait. He before whom eternity lies need not be in haste. But we cannot afford to do without guidance. Life calls for action, we must act; and without guidance we shall act wrongly, and grieve Him Whom to please is our deepest wish. The question What shall I do? How shall I act in the particular circumstances in which I am placed so as to please God? is one of the most practical questions of the Christian life.

It is well, in connection with this matter, to remember that all our moral perplexities, all perplexities relating to conduct, arise from sin.

Even if man had not sinned he would not have been omniscient. There would have been countless things to puzzle and perplex him, in connection with nature and with God. But he would never have been perplexed as to conduct. He might

not have had knowledge to satisfy the cravings of his mind, but he would always have had light to show him how to act. We do not know how to act, because of the fog which sin has raised about us.

It may be our own sin. The perplexities which surround our path to-day may be the result of sins which were committed long ago. We may have with our own hands planted, years ago, the thorns that now hedge up our path. A man's sins always find him out. And when the sin long committed rises, as it were, from the dead and faces a man, no wonder that it makes the path of life difficult. Some of you are feeling this to-day. The man you wronged, the woman you wronged, years ago has crossed your path. You do not know what to do. You are utterly perplexed, but the perplexity is the fruit of your sin. Or it may be your brother's sin that causes your perplexity. A life which would be very simple if lived

among angels becomes tangled and perplexed when it has to be lived among sinful men and women. The sin of others often makes it difficult for us to know how to act. Take, for example, the difficulties that meet a Christian man in the transaction of business. If he had to deal with absolutely upright and honorable men, who accepted and obeyed the law of Christ, his way would be easy. But when he finds himself in competition with unscrupulous, untruthful men, whose one aim is to overreach him, the question how he is to act is an exceedingly difficult one.

Questions as to conduct arise in our life at every moment of the day, and it is of the utmost importance to know how Christ deals with them. For our guidance in perplexity and for our deliverance out of it, He has given us these things, His Word, His Spirit, His Providence. These rightly used will always give us the light we need. But remem-

ber, the right using of them depends on the surrender of the will. We must be set on doing God's will if we wish Him to reveal His will to us. But for the revelation of His will:—

(a) He has given us His Word. In the Word of God we have revealed to us the principles that are in all cases to guide our conduct. Now that Word we have to hide in our heart. We have to let it dwell in us richly. The Bible does not give rules of life, but it gives principles which we may apply to every detail of life. Knowledge of the Word of God is the prime requisite for deliverance from perplexity as to matters of conduct. The perplexity of many is due to their ignorance of the Word of God. "What shall I do?" you ask. "What saith the Scripture?" I reply. There your Master's will is revealed.

(b) He has given us His Spirit. The Spirit is given to help us to apply the Word to the particular events of life.

The Spirit will bring the Word to our remembrance. But that implies that we have studied the Word. He cannot bring to our remembrance what we have never known. And the Spirit will not only bring the Word to our remembrance, but He will bring us into sympathy with the mind of Christ, so that when we ask the question, as we are bound to ask the question, "What would Jesus do?" we shall have from the indwelling Spirit the answer.

(c) He has given us His Providence. If we are the children of God, and are being led by His Spirit, then in the circumstances in which we are placed we have an element of guidance as to how we are to act. Circumstances are God's tutors for His children. He chooses our circumstances for us, and in circumstances read in the light of the Word, and the teaching of the Spirit, we have often received guidance how to act, and thus deliverance from our perplexities.



So we shall walk and please God. So we shall, even in the dark, do His will until we come in His grace to the land where we shall dwell in light, and know no longer in part, but know as we are known.



VIII

JESUS THE ALL-SUFFICIENT  
SAVIOUR



## VIII

### JESUS THE ALL-SUFFICIENT SAVIOUR

*"And when it was evening, His disciples came to Him, saying, This is a desert place, and the time is now past; send the multitude away, that they may go into the villages, and buy themselves victuals. . . . And they did all eat, and were filled: and they took of the fragments that remained twelve baskets full. And they that had eaten were about five thousand men, beside women and children."*—MATT. xiv. 15, 20, 21.

*"My God shall supply all your need according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus."*—PHIL. iv. 19.

We have been considering various aspects of the work of our Lord Jesus as the Saviour. We have spoken of Him as the unknown, and the half-known Saviour, as the omnipotent Saviour, as the all-willing Saviour, and as the waiting Saviour. We have spoken of Jesus

and our sins, our cares, our temptations, our doubts, our crosses, our bereavements, and our perplexities. This line of study might easily have been pursued further. We might go on to speak of Jesus and our joys, Jesus and our sorrows, Jesus and our work; but instead of pursuing the subject, I wish to bring these studies to a close by speaking of Jesus the all-sufficient Saviour.

In doing this I wish to turn your gaze on Him as He appears to us when working the miracle of feeding the five thousand. Our look must be fourfold.

1. Look at the multitude, and let that look remind you of our needs.

What a task lay before the Lord on that day! There were five thousand men, besides women and children. To feed a mass like this at a moment's notice might well seem impossible. Well might the disciples say, "Send them away, that they may go into the villages, and buy themselves victuals." Well might they

look startled when the reply came back, "They need not depart; give ye them to eat." Their hearts must have shrunk within them, as they ran their eyes again and again across that surging crowd. Yet, great as the task of feeding that multitude was, it was a little one compared with the task of meeting the needs of a single human soul. Why, think of our needs. Needs for the *body*—food, clothing, shelter, sleep. Needs clamant, that, if not satisfied promptly, will turn life into a nameless misery; needs ever recurring, calling not only for prompt, but for regular supply. Needs for the *soul*—soundness of mind, knowledge, fellowship, love. Needs as a man—courage, strength, wisdom; needs as a husband, needs as a father, needs as a citizen. Ever-fresh needs, which must be met or life will be a failure. Needs for the *spirit*, the deepest and most peremptory of all. Needs as sinners—pardon, reconciliation, cleansing. Needs as saints

—instruction, guidance, comfort. How innumerable are the needs of the spirit! Listen to this saint as he prays and lays his need before his Lord:—

“More holiness give me, more strivings within,  
 More patience in suffering, more sorrow for  
     sin,  
 More faith in my Saviour, more sense of His  
     care,  
 More joy in His service, more purpose in  
     prayer;  
 More gratitude give me, more trust in the  
     Lord,  
 More zeal for His glory, more hope in His  
     Word,  
 More tears for His sorrows, more pain at His  
     grief,  
 More meekness in trial, more praise for re-  
     lief.”

That seems a long catalogue of needs, but it is by no means an exhaustive one. The fact is that the more we know of God the greater our needs become. The vacuum within the soul grows larger, and cries out more vehemently for God, for the Living God. And, besides the spiritual needs of our own souls, there



are the needs for the spirits of others. Parents are praying for their children, children are praying for their parents. We feel that our deepest needs are unsatisfied unless the needs of those so dear to us are met.

Truly the multitude of human needs is appalling. From the task of satisfying them any human saviour might well shrink. He might well say with the disciples, "Send them away, that they may satisfy themselves." Yet Jesus says, "They need not depart."

But having looked at the multitude and having been reminded of the greatness of our needs—

2. Look at the Saviour, and let that look remind you whence comes the supply of our needs.

As we pass our needs in review, we are apt to despair of their being satisfied. But the cure for all such despair is a sight of the Saviour's face. The prospect of having to feed the multitude,

though it alarmed the disciples, did not alarm the Lord. He asked Philip indeed, "Whence shall we buy bread, that these may eat?" But we learn immediately that "this He said to prove him: for He Himself knew what He would do." The Lord Jesus is perfectly confident that He can meet your needs. And He would have you confident too. Now, in order that you may get this confidence—

(a) Remember who He is. He who stood in front of the multitude on that day was no mere man, but God manifest in the flesh. He who stands before us to-day is no mere man, but God. He can meet our body's needs, for He feeds the ravens when they cry, and the cattle upon a thousand hills are His. He can meet our soul's needs, for the soul at first came from His hands. He knows it, and in Him are hid all treasures of wisdom and knowledge. And He can meet our spirit's needs. Do we come to Him

as sinners? We find Him Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world, who by His blood secures our pardon, and by His righteousness our access to God. Do we come to Him as saints? He is the Bread of Life to feed our souls, the Living Water to refresh our souls, the True Vine in which we are to abide that we may bring forth fruit; the Way, the Truth, and the Life, by which we are brought near to God. Tasks impossible to others are easy to Him. But, to give us confidence, as we look on Him we must remember not only who He is, but we must—

(b) Remember what He has done. He who claims to be able to meet our needs is One who, for thousands of years, has met the needs of those who put their trust in Him. As the God of providence He keeps the barrel of meal from wasting, and the cruse of oil from failing. He draws from one the testimony, "I have been young, and now am

old, yet have I never seen the righteous forsaken nor his seed begging bread." And from another, "There hath not failed one good thing which the Lord promised." As the God of grace, too, He has proved faithful to all who put their trust in Him. Our needs are great, but our God is greater, and He puts all His resources at our disposal. Jesus Christ is Himself the pledge that our needs will be met. "He who spared not His own Son, but gave Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him freely give us all things?"

But having looked at the multitude and at the Saviour—

3. Look at the miracle, that you may know the measure in which Jesus supplies His people's need. The story sets this before us in the sentence, "He blessed, and brake, and gave the loaves to His disciples, and the disciples to the multitude. And they did all eat, and were filled; and they took up of the frag-

ments that remained twelve baskets full." This is a lesson which our God has been at great pains to teach His children. Throughout the whole Bible He shows us that, when He gives, He gives like a God. There is no scantiness, no grudging in His giving. There is ever a magnificence in what He does. He gives an ocean to each fish, He gives a whole sun to each flower. When He bestows blessing on the soul, the soul has to cry out, "My cup overflows." Does He pardon? Then it is, "As far as the east is distant from the west, so far hath He removed our transgressions from us." Does He cleanse? Then it is, "Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean; wash me, and I shall be whiter than the snow." Does He give victory? Then "We are more than conquerors through Him that loved us." Does He give power? Then "We can do all things through Him that strengthens us." Does He give us peace? It is the "Peace that

passeth all understanding." Does he give joy? It is a "Joy unspeakable and full of glory." There is a blessed much-more-ness about the Lord's dealings with His children. The twelve baskets are always in use. Not only are *we* filled, but *they* are filled too. "Where sin abounded, grace did much more abound." "If when we were enemies we were reconciled to God in the death of His Son, much more being reconciled we shall be kept safe in His life." "He is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think."

As we see these loaves and fishes running through that crowd till all are filled, and running over into those baskets, let us remember it is thus that all our needs are to be supplied. If you commit your loaves to Jesus there is before you a life of continual surprise. God will be continually outdoing your expectations. Your sins He will more than pardon; your cares He will more than bear: your

temptations He will more than overcome; your doubts He will more than dispel; your crosses He will more than carry; your perplexities He will more than resolve; your bereavements He will more than sweeten. "My God shall supply all your need according to His riches in glory in Christ Jesus."

But now, having looked at the multitude, at the Master, and at the miracle—

4. Look back to the Master, that you may be reminded that by whatever channel the supply reaches us it comes from His own blessed hand. All that the believer receives, if he is to live a really satisfied life, he must receive from Christ. Recall for the moment the incidents connected with the miracle. The Lord had bidden His disciples feed the multitude. The disciples said, "We have here but five loaves and two fishes." He said, "Bring them hither to Me." "And He commanded the multitude to sit down on the grass, and He took the five loaves,

and the two fishes, and looking up to heaven, He blessed, and brake, and gave the loaves to His disciples, and the disciples to the multitude." A casual on-looker might have said it was the disciples who were feeding the multitude. We know it was the Lord. And the multitude knew it was the Lord. Every morsel that reached them came from His hands. Every morsel of which they partook was accepted from His hands, and it was this that made their meal so satisfying.

As it was with the multitude, it must be with us. We must receive everything as from Christ. The Lord may, and does, employ various means for the actual meeting of our needs. He makes His disciples the bearers of His gifts. He employs a minister, a friend, a letter, a book, to give us the counsel, the comfort, the encouragement that we need. But we must look beyond the disciple to the Master if the gift is to satisfy. If we



rest in the instrument by which the gift is conveyed to us, the very gift will become a snare. Only as we receive it from Him will it satisfy.

But as you look at the Master, I would have you learn not only that, in order to live a satisfying life, we must receive everything *from* Christ, but we must receive everything *in* Christ. This is a supreme lesson, which we are too slow to learn. But the all-sufficiency of the Saviour is not known until it is learned. Christ, as I have often said, never gives anything away as we give alms to a beggar. All that we have, we have *in* Him. We are made partakers of Christ, and all our needs are met by our being sharers with Him. Our lives are filled and satisfied as we abide in Him. He is the Vine and we are the branches. But the vine is all-sufficient for the branches only while they abide in the vine. "If a man abide not in Me he is cast forth as a branch and is withered." But if a

man abide, he brings forth much fruit, for all his needs are met not only by the Vine but in the Vine. This profound truth, that our needs are supplied only in Christ, is often forgotten. It is because it is so often forgotten that so many of our wants are unsupplied. We suffer ourselves to get out of communion, we neglect the Bible and restrain prayer, and then we wonder that wisdom, and guidance, and courage, and power to witness are lacking.

The thought that all our wants are met in Christ is to me the sweetest thought of all. As I look at the Master multiplying the loaves and the fishes for the multitude, I remember that I am in Him, complete in Him—complete in Him in whom dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily, and that if I am careworn, or pressed by temptation or doubt, it is simply because I have forgotten this, and not availed myself of the grace which He puts at my disposal.

Will you let this thought sink deep into the heart, and will you go forth never, never again to doubt Him? Will you say quietly, but in full assurance of faith, "My God shall supply all my need according to His riches in glory in Christ Jesus"?

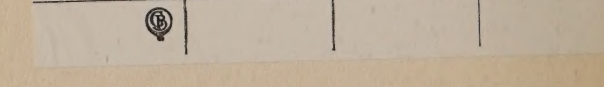








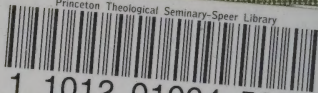
**Date Due**

[illegible]





Princeton Theological Seminary-Speer Library



1 1012 01004 5930